

# to qualify for Olympic marathon

By **Charles  
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Athletics SA (ASA) is planning to use the Nedbank Refined Breaking Barriers 50km ultra-marathon in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, on Sunday as part of the qualifiers for the 42.2km Olympic marathon.

The banking giant put together a race to allow the top ultra-marathon runners an opportunity to break the 50km world record.

Also in the running are athletes from East Africa, among other internationals.

Given lack of opportunities for standard marathon (42.2km) events in SA currently, due to Covid-19, ASA will allow the local athletes to use the race to qualify for the Olympics in an unprecedented development.

The men's qualifying time is 2:11:30, while the women's is 2:20:30. This means those who qualify will be timed for the first 42.2km they run in the 50km race.

This development should come as good news to local Olympic hopefuls who had already given up on qualifying due to lack of races and opportunity to travel for races abroad.

The deadline for Olympic marathon qualification is at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, the eagerly awaited 50km ultra-marathon record attempt on Sunday will start with the women's race at 7:15am, followed by the men's race at 7:45am.

Britain's Aly Dixon is the women's 50km record holder

ASA approves a  
50km race to act  
as qualifier

with a time of 3:07:30, while the men's record is held by the late SA long-distance sensation Thompson Magawana.

Magawana clocked 2:43:38 when he won the Two Oceans 50km ultra-marathon race in 1988.

Comrades Marathon champion Gerda Steyn, three-time Soweto Marathon champion Irvette van Zyl and former Comrades champion Charne Bosman will spearhead the SA women's challenge against the foreign contingent of Bashaike Bilo (Ethiopia), Dominika Stelmach (Poland) and Russian Alexandra Marozova.

Philemon Mathiba of Nedbank Running Club, Latendo Mspoto and Sithembiso Mqhele of the Murray & Roberts Running Club are some of the prominent male runners confirmed for the historic event in Gqeberha.

The winner in both men's and women's races will walk home with the prize money of R400,000.

"It is all systems go and we are happy and are behind this race," ASA president James Moloi told Sowetan yesterday.

"We see this as a chance for the men and women who have not qualified for the Olympics to try their luck [to qualify]. We will measure their time by 42.2km and if they go on to finish the 50km race that would be a bonus." The field is con-



**Gerda Steyn in action.** / GALLO IMAGES  
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